

Mill Hill Landowner Outreach Stewardship Project

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Mill Hill Regional Park in Victoria, BC is a fifty-hectare park featuring red-listed (endangered) plant communities including endangered Garry oak (Oregon oak) and related ecosystems. In recent years threats to the integrity of the park's ecosystems have increased in severity: invasive plants like scotch broom are displacing native plant communities and residential development around the park is increasing pedestrian traffic off trails and other unsuitable activities. Direct results of the suburban encroachment include: habitat fragmentation; displaced wildlife resulting in increased browsing pressures; more vegetation trampling; increased soil erosion; and increased wildlife disturbance by pets at large.

The Capital Regional District Parks (CRD Parks) Restoration Strategy addressed the threats to Mill Hill, recommending a landowner contact program as part of their multi-year plan. Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) co-ordinated a Good Neighbours project (GNP) with CRD Parks in 2004 to provide outreach in the area surrounding Mill Hill. HAT delivered the GNP during the summer of 2004, contacting over 600 landowners by mail. Staff reached 158 landowners by telephone. Seventy-one residents received information packages and 57 also received garden assessment visits. Visits included discussions about park restoration and threats, naturescaping, invasive plants, pesticide and synthetic fertilizer alternatives, composting, and efficient irrigation. We secured verbal stewardship agreements with all of the visited landowners. Sixteen families signed written voluntary stewardship agreements. Thirty-five families requested naturescaping prescriptions for their properties. HAT is currently applying this successful stewardship project model to other sensitive areas including the Colquitz River linear park system.

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